



MINING PEOPLE

NINEPENCE

"THERE SHALL BE CONSTITUTED A FUND TO BE APPLIED FOR PURPOSES
"CONNECTED WITH THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING, RECREATION AND CONDITIONS
"OF LIVING OF WORKERS IN AND ABOUT COAL MINES

(Mining Industry Act, 1920)

MINERS' WELFARE COMMISSION

1920-1945


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MINING PEOPLE



F O R E W O R D

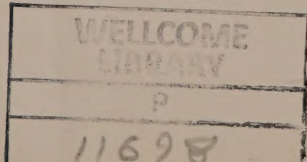
IN Great Britain the Coal Mining Industry is one which, for reasons inherent and largely immutable, stands apart. Geological conditions have determined the distribution of the mines and have made mining a sustained battle against natural forces. Separation from other industries however, has never put coal-mining beyond the influence of changing economic conditions. As may be expected in a basic industry, it has often been the first to feel the stress of, and the last to recover from, trade fluctuations.

The Industrial Revolution was due to the discovery of the fact that coal could be mined in quantity and could be used to generate the motive power for mills and factories. But that era of rapid expansion left behind it some regrettable legacies. Standing apart, as they so often did, from the rest of the industrial population of the country, many mining communities grew up in their own individual way and remained largely unaffected by urban developments in general.

On those who follow this calling, mining imprints characteristics which distinguish them from men who work in other industries. Moreover, mining operations involve conditions of physical discomfort to which miners are inured, but which have accentuated their feeling of isolation. On the other hand miners have always taken a pride in their hereditary skill, and mining communities have always been homogeneous and endowed with their own distinctive features.

In the years of economic vicissitude which followed the Great War of 1914-1918, no small part of the unrest amongst miners was the expression of a desire to gain national recognition of the value of their work. The growth of transport facilities and the effect of education removed to some extent the miners' sense of isolation. But it also gave rise to natural discontent with their lot, and a keen appreciation of the fact that there were better opportunities for social well-being than were to be found in the average colliery village or township.

In situations like this it has been a sound tradition of British statesmanship to empower a body of men of distinction to enquire into them, and, by way of a report, to advise Parliament upon them. The Sankey Commission which in 1919 reported upon the mining industry was such a body, and Parliament gave legislative effect to some of its recommendations in the Mining Industry Act of 1920. By this Act was launched a great experiment, and the purpose of this booklet is to chronicle in outline the working of that experiment during the past 25 years.





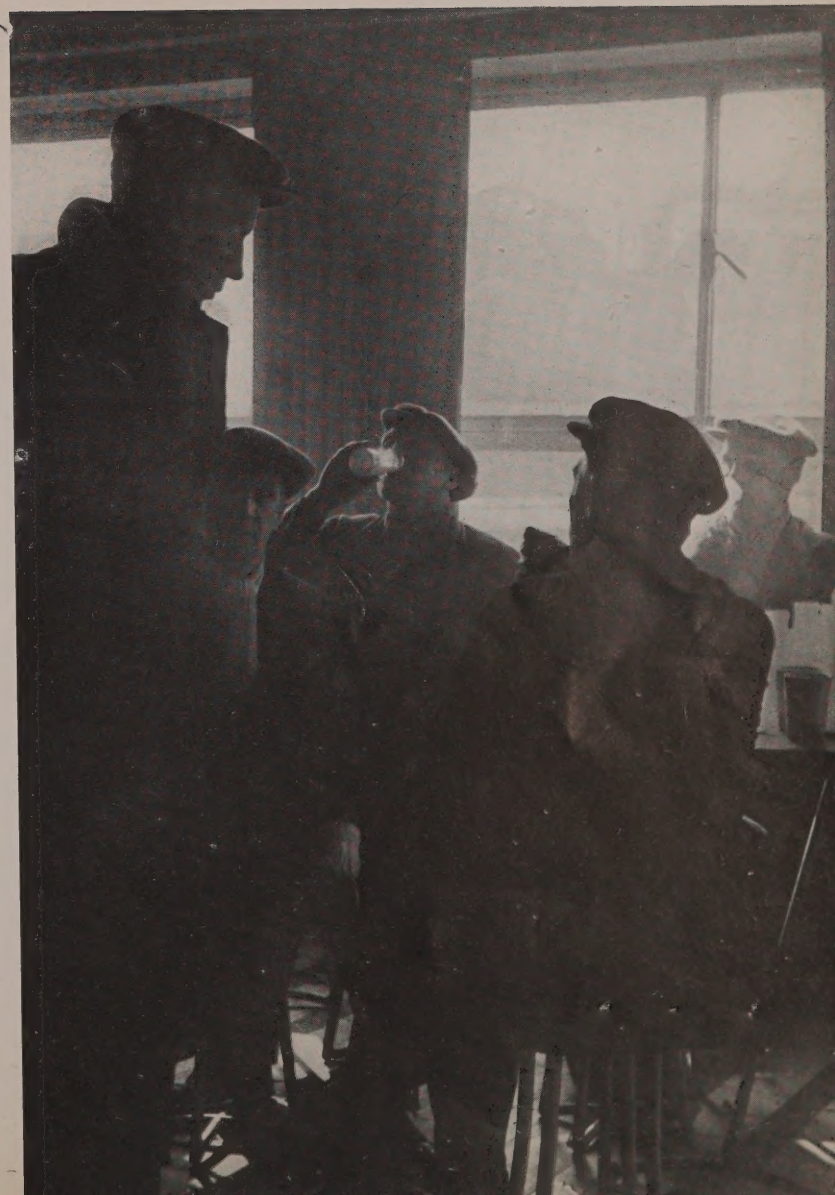
The Miners' Welfare Commission is a body of men drawn mainly from the industry itself, entrusted with the responsibility of administering the Miners' Welfare Fund. They act in the capacity of trustees. Their work is purely voluntary, only assisted by a small staff of technical experts. Both in the Commission and in the Committees throughout the districts, owners and men work side by side in harmony and good will for the achievement of a common purpose. As independent Chairman for the past eleven years I am keenly conscious of my responsibilities in helping to carry out what is a unique social movement, without a parallel in this or any other country. For all these reasons I am glad to have the opportunity of introducing the work of the Miners' Welfare Commission to a wider public than the Commission is accustomed to address.

The achievements of the Miners' Welfare Fund are considerable, but they are not of the kind which have in the past readily engaged public attention. So much interest is now awakened in the industry that a broad picture of miners' welfare may now be acceptable to those who hitherto have felt no reason to be interested in such matters. To-day, many a family to whom coal has formerly not been more than a domestic necessity has a new interest in mining. Perhaps one of their members has been called up to the mines under the Bevin scheme. They and their friends will wish to know more about the way in which he will fare in the pit and in the community in which he must live. Some misgivings may be allayed and some encouragement gained through these pages.

This booklet is more than a bare account of the work accomplished through the Miners' Welfare Fund. It is a story of enterprise and of progressive advance, which throws a striking light on those human qualities, British in essence, which find so characteristic an expression in the lives of the miners. It may also stand as a slight testimony to the fact that in this great industry there are still rewards for ambition and enterprise; still room for those who find satisfaction in doing skilled and hazardous service to the nation. Many such are needed to fill the depleted ranks of the mining profession and provide a steady flow of recruits to a vital industry. They might travel much farther than to the coalfields and meet less genuine comradeship and worth than they will find among miners.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to express my thanks to all members of District and Local Miners' Welfare Committees. Their counsel has been inspiring and their enthusiasm invaluable. Together we have done much good work. The future holds opportunities for much greater work and we can face it with the knowledge that it will be built upon foundations of confidence and mutual respect.

FREDERICK SYKES,
CHAIRMAN,
Miners' Welfare Commission.





THE WELFARE OF THE MINER AND HIS DEPENDANTS

The word "welfare" has acquired several meanings. In the sense in which it is now more commonly used in industry, it expresses the solicitude of individual employers, or associations of employers, for the well-being of their employees, usually at the place of work, rather than in the communities in which they live. It also means a special aspect of the management of personnel which is something more than a matter of contract between employer and employee.

In many industries, statutory orders lay down appropriate standards for safety and hygiene in works and factories. Welfare as it is known in the mining industry goes far beyond statutory obligations and those which, elsewhere, are accepted as the responsibility of employers. It is not a matter for individual undertakings only; it is applied to a whole industry.

Miners' Welfare originated in an Act of Parliament in 1911, dealing generally with conditions within the coalmining industry, but which touched, somewhat tentatively, one aspect of welfare, namely the provision of pithead baths. Following the reports of the Sankey Commission in 1920, and the Samuel Commission in 1926, two more Mining Industry Acts were more directly concerned with welfare. These established a Fund and an administrative framework for the purpose of welfare for workers in and about coal mines.

When viewed as a complete series, these and subsequent Acts present a picture unique in the industrial history of Great Britain, viz.: comprehensive welfare founded on legislation but effected, in the main, by voluntary and co-operative methods.

The approach to actual welfare problems was, at first, tentative and experimental. But as soon as experiments began to show results, and it became clear that the spirit of organized welfare

could flourish notwithstanding difficult and complicated conditions within the industry, its scope was enlarged or strengthened.

Hence we find to-day, welfare firmly planted in the mining industry and, although it was not always so, its importance as an integral part of the industry widely recognized. In 25 years it has developed from small and tentative beginnings into a great organization for the benefit of the miner and his dependants, with capital assets in the region of 24 millions sterling and with an annual income, in normal times, of £1,000,000.

Much work has already been done. Before it can be appreciated fully the distinctive features of the traditional life of the miner which have determined largely the forms of welfare provisions must be recalled.



THE TRADITIONAL LIFE OF THE MINER

The miner's daily work is hard and heavy. He has accepted, as part of that work, discomforts and disadvantages affecting not only him, but, to a lesser extent, his wife and family.

These discomforts are found in all mines and mining operations. They may vary in degree from pit to pit but are never absent. Pits may be dry and dusty, wet and muggy, cool or hot, but in all of them the coal dust is black. All this means, not only fatigue, but sweat and grime on his body and in the clothes he wears.

When mid-shift comes, there is no nearby canteen. The best he can do, hundreds of yards down in the earth and perhaps a mile or two from the bottom of the pit shaft, is to find somewhere where there is a bit more head room. There he takes what ease he can; opens his snap-tin and begins his frugal meal. Frugal, because the food and drink he can take underground is limited by the conditions of his occupation. He has to carry it all with him, and long experience has proved to him that only certain foods are digestible and will restore his energy quickly and be at the same time palatable underground. Here, too, is the reason why the miner sometimes has a sweet tooth and is always careful in the choice of food to be eaten at work.

His work entails a need for alertness, caution and attention to detail and method. When it is done, he leaves the native temperature of the pit physically tired and often has some distance to travel on foot or by train, bus, or cycle in all weathers before he reaches home. There, the tub on the hearth, the traditional method of bathing, awaits him, and his main meal of the day will be ready. But his pit clothes have to be dry when he next goes on shift and they will perhaps need to be hung on the fireguard for several hours, a constant reminder to him and to his family that mining coal is a grimy business.



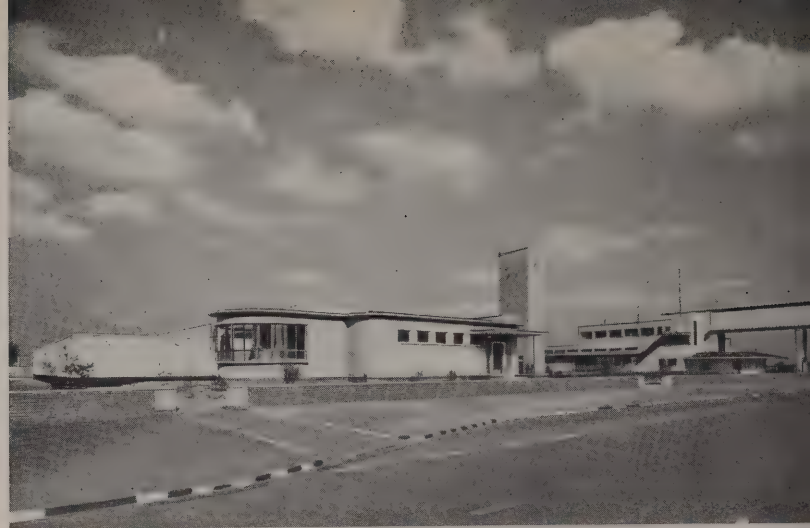


Work in the pit never stops. The shift he works may mean, a departure or return in the early morning or late at night. If two or three men from the same household work in the pit, each on a different shift, this troublesome routine will be continuous and the housewife's work unending.

These are the distinctive features of daily life to which mining people grew accustomed but which gave rise to the need for specific welfare measures. They give the clue to some of the reasons for popular misconceptions about the miner in the past. His dusty condition was honourably come by but that dust was a great nuisance. His working clothes, either of a kind specially suitable for his work—almost a uniform in fact—or what was once his Sunday-best suit, were subjected to hard wear, and soon became dirty, patched and threadbare. In combination with his blackened face, they gave him that characteristic but incongruous appearance behind which the self-respecting and oft-times highly cultured citizen is apparent only to his familiars.

These are barriers which the miner had to surmount before he faced life on a fair footing with contemporaries in other industries. Little wonder that miners and the general public have sometimes suffered from a lack of mutual understanding.





“To Provide Facilities for Taking Baths and Drying Clothes”

(Mining Industry Act, 1926)

Here was the beginning of welfare problems. How could the miner enjoy to the full all the other things which it is the purpose of welfare to provide until he was rid of the eternal bogy of pit-dirt and sweaty clothes?

The answer was simple: there was no magic in it—it was the pithead bath. Those who have visions of tubs or slipper baths, plunges and swimming pools must think again. There is only one way to wash a miner—his wife now readily agrees—and that is under a shower.

“Leave your dirt where you get it—at the pit!” was for a long time the repeated exhortation. It may sound odd that such an exhortation was ever necessary, but tradition and custom are hard to break. Exhortation both to provide and use pithead baths is no longer necessary. Miners now take to them like ducks to water. Accommodation for 442,000 miners has been provided, and practically all the men employed at the 362 collieries equipped with pithead baths bathe daily. These baths may accommodate as few as 50 or as many as 4,000 miners.

In terms of the number of men accommodated more than one half of this form of welfare work is done, about 640 more collieries employing about 300,000 remain to be equipped with baths.

Within the pithead bath the miner finds a room in which to strip off his pit clothes and to leave them to dry during the time he is at home, and another in which to put on his home-going clothes. After much experiment, it has been found that stacks of sheet-metal lockers, through which warm dry air is forced, are the most satisfactory method of drying these clothes. In the pit locker room each miner has his own locker for his pit clothes and another one in the clean locker room for his home clothes. In them he finds, in much better conditions of convenience and speed, all those facilities which he hitherto found on the hearth and the fireguard. And most important of all, his pit clothes never come into contact with his home clothes. Whilst he is at home the drying plant will do its job; when he returns to work, a warm and dry suit of pit clothes will await him.



Having stripped off his pit clothes, he now needs to remove the dirt on his body. So, armed with his soap-tray and towel, which he keeps in his pit locker, he passes on to the bath-house. He is anxious to get this business of bathing over as soon as possible and finds that the shower in the pithead bath fills the bill admirably. Six minutes; a helping hand with his back; about four gallons of hot water and two for a cold douche is all that is needed for a thorough wash-down.



The storage of four gallons of hot water for each miner in a pithead bath which accommodates a total of, say, 2,000, presents a fairly formidable engineering problem. Of this total number, the big shift of some 1,000 bustling miners will be clamouring for their baths in the space of 30 minutes or so. They bustle, not because they fear the hot water might all be used, but because buses and trains are waiting and they are anxious to get home. The water will certainly be there when the big shift arrives; all piping hot and with ample reserves.



After bathing, the miner, taking with him his towel and soap-tray, passes along to the clean locker room. Here is his other locker containing his home clothes. A few minutes to dress; a convenient mirror on the locker by which to adjust his cap at a jaunty angle, and he is ready for the journey home. Ready, that is, so far as the outer man is concerned. But, perhaps, the inner man, after a hard shift, is tired and complaining and the journey home may be a long one.

Even before the war, the majority of pithead baths had a busy canteen, rather of the snack-bar type, where the miner could get some light refreshment. In times when milk was plentiful, he was a great milk drinker and evinced a great liking for sweet things—cakes, buns, and even “pop”! The explanation is simple. Milk is the best assuager of a dusty thirst, and sugar is known to be a speedy restorative of energy. The miner needs enough energy to take a weary body home to his real meal—the first since he left home—and something to salve a dust-dry tongue and throat.

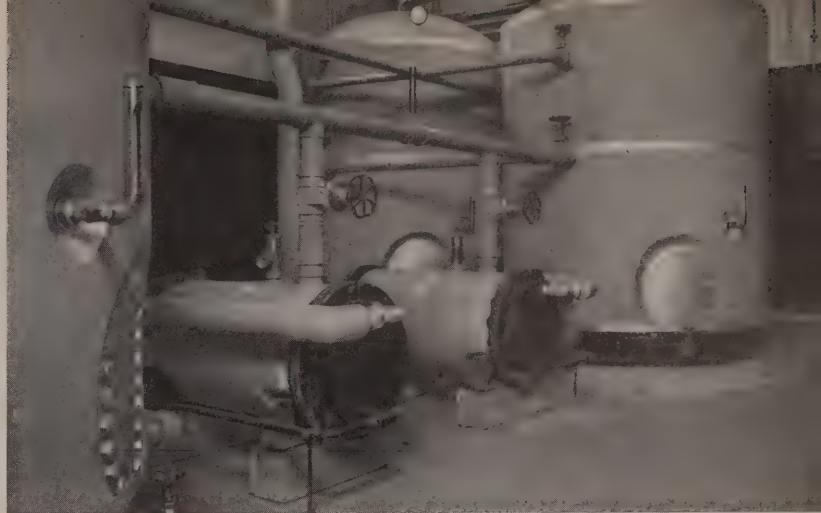


When he returns to work the next day he goes through the same pithead bath routine but this time in reverse. He changes into his pit garb and goes to the pit direct from the baths ; in some cases, entirely under cover, by means of a covered way or gantry over the pit yard.

These are the main functions of the pithead bath. Power-driven boot brushes, boot-greasing apparatus, taps for drinking water, a convenient hook to hold his shirt and towel while the miner bathes ; cunningly fashioned stowage devices in the lockers. All these and other small things contribute to the well-being of miners by making changing and bathing at the pit a simple and quick routine.

In the baths problems of steam, water, electric power, supply and waste water disposal are sometimes quite formidable. Although, normally, many of these services are derived from the colliery plant, it is not uncommon for a pithead bath to be an entirely self-contained unit, having its own plant for steam raising, water softening, electric power and waste water disposal.

The capital cost of pithead baths is met from the Miners' Welfare Fund but no grants are made for upkeep costs. They must be self-supporting. Each bath is administered by Trustees and a Management Committee, and on these governing bodies employers and employees have equal representation. Contributions towards running costs are made in varying degrees and ways by colliery companies, sometimes by cash or through the provision of services, free, or at special rates. In nearly all baths, however, the miners pay the larger part of upkeep costs through contributions made by agreed deductions from their wage packets. These weekly contributions vary a good deal in amount from district to district and also in proportion to the size of the pithead bath. They are, as a general rule, less for a bath for 2,000 than one for 200, but throughout the country they average 6d. per man per week.



Pithead baths have a lore and legends of their own, and the miner is prone to make his pithiest comments in an apposite way. Perhaps the greatest tribute, and the aptest of comments, lies in a story told by one of the Commission's staff of architects who was inspecting an installation a month or so after it had been put into operation. He was approached by an elderly collier who, fully attired and accoutred, was leaving the baths on his way to the pit. "Art owt to do with baths, lad?" was the somewhat abrupt question. The architect explained that he had had more than a bit to do with them. "Well," said the old fellow, "I'd like to tell you I'm a fool. When they talked about baths I thought nowt of 'em; when they were building 'em I thought nowt of 'em; when they were opened I still thought nowt of 'em, but I were a fool!"

The story, which is better when garnished with its original adjectives, reflects the curious fact that it was not, at one time, an easy job to popularize pithead baths. Even though the hoary superstition that to wash the back was weakening was

long since dead, the older men often felt that a break with the fixed habits of a lifetime was a big thing to undertake at their age. It is that much more to their credit that they have made the break. Even some of the younger men were sceptical at first, but where fair words were unconvincing, the pithead bath in being won them instantly. The word "champion" is basic English for a wealth of praise in the miner's vocabulary, and when used, as it often is, to epitomize his appreciation of the baths, it is reward enough for the many who have advocated the tradition of bathing at the colliery. "Nowt but forty years too late" is often the sole criticism of the older miner.

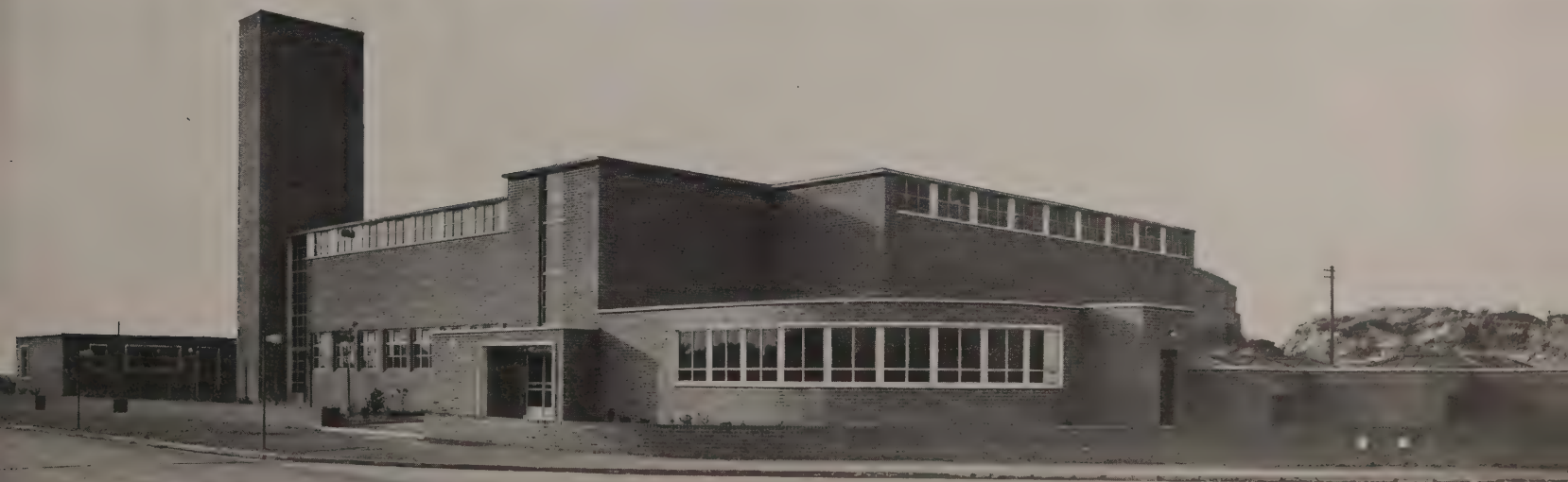
Where a pithead bath has recently been put into operation, the physical benefits to its users are quickly noticeable. A new sense of self-respect made manifest in mien and bearing can also be discerned. The miner returns home, not in his working clothes but better dressed than most other artisans.



The effects on his home are no less noticeable. The domestic virtues of the pitman's wife are well known. Traditionally, her daily round of toil has had no beginning and no end; and no time, certainly, to forget that her menfolk are miners. Yet, in spite of this extra work, the miner's home was always spotless. What it has meant to keep it so, in terms of domestic drudgery, is incalculable. But the advent of the pithead baths lightens these heavy burdens, and no one realizes this more quickly than the miner's wife. Indeed, to hazard a guess, many a miner, apathetic or obstinate in his attitude to the pithead bath, has been won to the virtues of leaving dirt at the pit by peaceful persuasion at home. This passive, but critical, part played by miners' wives has been well rewarded. The many baths up and down the country, and the many more to come, are intended to be two-fold in their benefit; a great convenience to the miner, and an inestimable boon to his family.

As a conclusion to this brief account of pithead baths, it is pleasing to record that use has been made of them during the

war in other ways than by providing for miners. Because of its adaptability, the pithead bath was often earmarked by the local authorities at the urgent call for gas decontamination centres, and pithead baths can also claim to have bathed a considerable part of the British and American armies, in various districts and from time to time. Many soldiers, who have been stationed in mining areas, have warm tributes to pay to the pithead baths and other miners' welfare provisions, and many a unit commander has been grateful for such contributions to the welfare of his men. The scale on which the large pithead bath does its work is not always realized; and therein lies a neat story. An officer marched a company of his men up to the pithead bath and enquired from the Superintendent, somewhat diffidently, whether they should be admitted in tens or twenties; the "Super" cast his expert eye over the job to be done and replied, "I'll take 'em all at once," and being something of a military martinet himself, promptly took command and put the whole company through an unfamiliar drill!





miner himself, especially if he is getting on in years, likes a quiet game of cribbage, dominoes or billiards, and somewhere to read the newspapers and periodicals or to find a book, or, in the summer, perhaps, a game of bowls—at any rate something not too strenuous. The young men seek something more active; football, cricket or tennis. The boys, too, need premises for their particular activities, and the children somewhere to play undisturbed.

These many needs have all been met, to a greater or lesser extent, by the Miners' Welfare Institute and the recreation ground. In all some 1,500 schemes have been provided at a cost of £5,950,000. Not that there is any uniformity either in their size or distribution. The "Welfare," as it is most commonly known, may be a small hut, with a billiards table and a games room. It may, on the other hand, be a much more imposing building, such as those shown on the preceding page, where, besides the club section for the men, there is a large hall for social functions, committee rooms and perhaps a library. It may even be a centre in the real sense; a building of conspicuous architectural merit with provision for leisure-time activities of members of the community of all ages and both sexes, such as dances, concerts, plays, discussions, gymnastics and the cinema.

Some institutes cater only for men. In others, the women and children are entertained, perhaps on high days and holidays

only. A few house an active Women's Guild for there has, in recent years, been a marked tendency towards a fuller use of the "Welfare." While this was noticeable in peace time, the war has unquestionably proved the value of an institute which does not cater for the men only, but makes its hospitality a real family affair. Again the best types of institutes are not used merely for recreation. In them educational and cultural activities reach a high standard; these fulfil a particularly valuable social purpose. But it is in the community centre, where all these things are to be found at their best. In such buildings—and they need really to be designed specially for the purpose—the men's club, the women's guild, the boys' club, besides other things, all have their own accommodation and share a spacious hall and a buffet restaurant. Here welfare activities are really communal, each sectional interest benefiting from the support of the others; and all combine to make well-being a live and vigorous reality. Such a comprehensive welfare scheme, although the ideal expression of a "purpose connected with the social well-being," can only be supported by a fairly concentrated mining population. But it is more than an ideal; it is a target for the future.

In the meantime, the "Welfare," large or small, merely a men's club or an all-embracing social rendezvous, will continue to give a great service to the mining community.



BOYS' CLUBS

The boys' club, as elsewhere, is an asset to any mining community. It consists of something more than premises and opportunities for recreation. Possessing the right atmosphere and the right leadership it will have a good influence in the development of a type of young man in whom there is a keen sense of the responsibilities of citizenship. The value of the boys' club is well understood in the mining industry and in consequence many have been aided by grants from the Welfare Fund.

These clubs provide indoor recreation, physical training and handicraft and first-aid instruction. Opportunities are also given for talks and discussions on subjects of general cultural interest. For outdoor activities they serve as the mainspring in the organization of games, sports, hikes and week-end camps.

The younger people have been promised wider social opportunities after the war, and it is to be expected that the Miners' Welfare Fund, which has already been used to aid boys' clubs, may be influential in bringing such opportunities to the mining communities. In no better way could it be ensured that young mining people develop into the kind of citizens best fitted to inherit the benefits of miners' welfare.





CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS

In every colliery village or township the children's playground has a practical role to play. It keeps the children off the streets, away from the dangers of traffic. It provides somewhere for the children to congregate and play games so that in the holidays they need not always be hanging on mother's apron strings or impeding her in her daily work.

The children's playground is sited where it can be approached in comparative safety; but not so close that its clamour will be a nuisance or so remote that there will be no watchful eye to overlook it. Ample space for free games, as well as ingenious apparatus to meet the demand for adventure and thrill is provided. Everything is simple, safe and robust, and a limit is set on things which are more decorative than practical. All these things taken into account, it is possible to strike a note of gaiety. Every day can be a fair day, with roundabouts and swings and nothing to pay on either. To complete the playground, there is protection from the sudden shower; a simple shelter, containing sanitary accommodation, is all that is necessary.



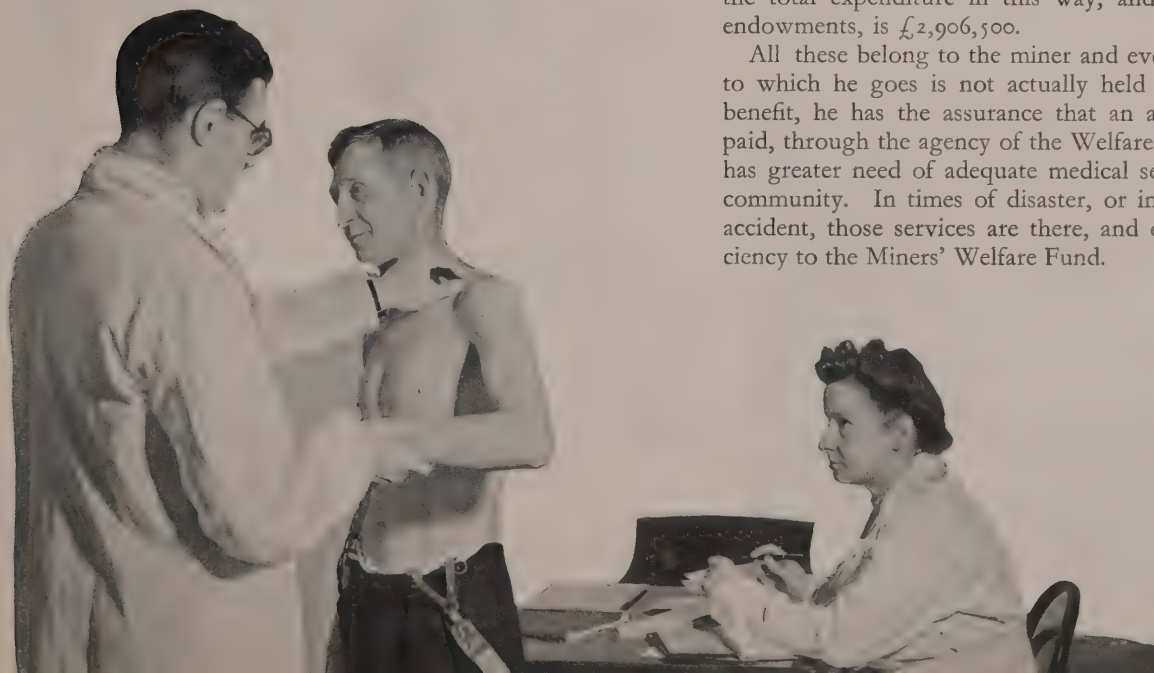
HEALTH—MEDICAL TREATMENT

The Miners' Welfare Fund has been used extensively to establish or assist many institutions and schemes for the benefit of the miner and his family in times of sickness or accident. There has not been, in these directions, any fixed plan or even any intention to treat mining people differently from the general public. Rather has it been that when local needs become known, the desired development or extension of the hospital or scheme has been stimulated by grants towards capital expenditure or by endowment. In this manner about £498,000 has been devoted to hospitals. Ambulance services to supplement those provided through other means have received £168,000 in grants.

The services of that invaluable person, the District Nurse,

have been secured in many districts. A house has been built for her or equipment provided to assist her in her many tasks of alleviating pain and tending sickness in miners' households. £89,420 has been spent on this particularly valuable service. In other districts, arrangements are such that when a miner needs special medical treatment, the loan of an invalid chair or, following an accident, an artificial limb or a glass eye, he can get help through the Fund. In these diverse ways miners have benefited to the tune of £135,000. After sickness or an accident, the miner, or his wife, may go to one of the Miners' Welfare Convalescent Homes. Some of these homes have been built for the purpose near the sea; others are adaptations of country houses. Elsewhere, admission tickets are purchased for convalescent homes other than those aided by the Fund, and the total expenditure in this way, and by capital grants and endowments, is £2,906,500.

All these belong to the miner and even where the institution to which he goes is not actually held in trust for his special benefit, he has the assurance that an ample footing has been paid, through the agency of the Welfare Fund. No community has greater need of adequate medical services than the mining community. In times of disaster, or in everyday sickness and accident, those services are there, and owe much of their efficiency to the Miners' Welfare Fund.





RESEARCH

Mining is dangerous. Not as dangerous as it has been, for much more is now known about those hazards which lurk in all pits ready to beset miners. Many researches have been made into subjects which have a bearing on the safety and health of the miner. The Miners' Welfare Commission has not, of course, claimed competence to direct such researches or even to suggest particular lines of investigation. This has been left to the Safety in Mines Research Board appointed by the Minister of Fuel and Power.

The S.M.R.B., as it is known in the industry, has in the past been almost wholly supported by grants from the Miners' Welfare Commission. At Sheffield the Board has its own laboratories for small-scale experiments, and near Buxton, up on the moors, there is a large field-research station. Here, and also in the mines, scientists and technicians are constantly at work on safety problems. Independent investigators are invited to these stations; others work in university laboratories. All work towards, and have been aided by the Fund, for the same end: better conditions of safety and health in the pits of Great Britain.

Coal dust and firedamp explosions are staged at Buxton—on a most impressive scale. Such things as the use and safety of plant and appliances are under constant examination. Methods of supporting roofs in mines; the safe use of wire ropes and explosives are tested. Electrical apparatus is made safer; safety lamps improved. The causes of silicosis and nystagmus—both afflictions peculiar to miners—are studied from the practical angles of prevention or limitation.

But this is only an indication of the type of work done by the S.M.R.B. A proper exposition would take much more space than can be spared here. It would not be enough even to publish the results of all this work in scientific reports, although

in this form they may interest other scientists and research workers. An essential part of the Board's work is to translate the results of scientific experiments into non-scientific language, and in the form of practical advice, to disseminate safety information throughout the coalfields.

To accomplish this part of the work many methods have been evolved. For instance, the station personnel do not remain aloof; they invite the miners to come to see for themselves. Parties of them are entertained with realistic disasters—but with a striking difference—they are to be viewed at leisure and in safety. The aim is not simply to be impressive; it is to give opportunities to learn at first-hand how the causes of disaster and accident are investigated and to appreciate the why and wherefore of safety rules and regulations. Much more is thereby learnt than can be learnt from safety slogans. Above all, the miners come to learn that "S.M.R.B." means the pursuit of real safety, not merely scientific investigation for its own sake.

The research station returns the compliment of these many visits, and research workers go into the pits to maintain contact with practical work. By these means confidence and respect become mutual between scientist and miner and the quest for safety is continuous.



WELFARE IN WAR TIME



The war has set severe limitations to welfare in some directions but has hastened development in others. For over 15 years the Miners' Welfare Commission maintained a building programme for pithead baths designed to equip as many collieries as revenue of the Fund would permit. This programme and that for other welfare amenities continued until the critical days of 1940. Then the Government called a halt. Building labour and materials were momentarily in urgent demand for more vital purposes. The most that could be spared was that necessary for the maintenance of existing amenities.

In the anxious months of 1940 the Government must have had some anxiety about the food situation. All possible economies in shipping had to be made. Moves were made to popularize communal feeding, through which less could be made to go further, more variety and an equitable distribution of non-rationed food could be secured. Hence the British Restaurant and the Works Canteen. The general public, even those unaccustomed to eat away from home, were given opportunities to get an extra meal at a reasonable price. Industrial workers could not only get a meal conveniently at the works canteen but were assured of that little extra needed to sustain them in their heavy labours.



CANTEENS

The application of this method of providing wartime meals for miners came under consideration, and colliery companies were called upon to establish canteens for the purpose at all collieries. This was a specialist's task of huge dimensions. The then Secretary for Mines and the Ministry of Food therefore sought the aid of the Miners' Welfare Commission as the body most appropriate to tackle the situation and one known to have an organization and staff, until lately engaged on other welfare programmes. Although many had gone into the Forces or to other work of national importance, there was a group of older men—administrative staff, architects, surveyors and district welfare officers which could be quickly switched on to this new form of welfare work. First, the position had to be regularized. A Defence Regulation was made enabling the money accumulating for the building of pithead baths to be used for aiding the building of colliery canteens.

But the miner was underground at the time of his mid-shift meal. This made the problem different from that of the works canteen. The snack-bar type was known to be popular at pithead baths, but it had limitations. Several progressive colliery companies notably in Yorkshire, had already built and equipped canteens, on the lines of the industrial canteen, intended primarily to supply hot meals. It seemed that the pit canteen needed to be, not more ambitious than the industrial canteen, but more accommodating. Flexible is perhaps a better word. So standard plans and schedules of equipment of a special type of canteen and applicable to the needs of any colliery were prepared to guide colliery companies in their decisions. Arrangements were also made to obtain equipment, then in short supply, and in a short time a large building programme was started.



Now, practically all collieries have a wartime canteen which the miner can use daily. Maybe he will drop in on his way to the pitbank and take a snack, say, tea and cake, or buy something for his snap tin: some freshly-cut sandwiches. Pit canteens do a brisk trade in "snaps" and "baits." After his day's work, another snack, and, if the weather is cold, a bowl of soup to take the edge off the appetite. But if it is a meatless day at home, or the hot-meal menu at the canteen is particularly inviting, then he will have a full meal, which, washed down with a generous mug of tea, will cost him about one shilling. On night shift, he can paradoxically have his breakfast before going home to bed. Then his wife will be spared the effort of getting up to get it for him.

Of all days, pay day is the busiest one at the canteen; nearly all the miners are in or about the pit at about the same time. This is the time when pals working on different shifts meet over a bite in the canteen. There is a sociable air about the place; it becomes something more than a place to eat. But night and day the doors of the canteen are open and invariably there is something good to be had quickly.

Pit canteens vary greatly in size: some are little more than a glorified coffee-stall, others seat more than a thousand miners at a time. A few are managed by caterers, most are run by the miners' womenfolk, who know well what their men like to eat and how it must be cooked, and soon become as competent in catering for the larger family in the canteen as they are at home.

Since 1941, about 950 wartime canteens have been provided by the Welfare Fund. Many serve hot meals daily; others specialize in packed meals to be eaten in the pit and in tempting snacks and light refreshment. The programme of building, which continues, has already cost £2,250,000.



REHABILITATION CENTRES

In the coal-mining industry the accident rate is high, and this unfortunately continues in spite of all that has been and is being done to reduce it. Many of these accidents involve the fracture of bones and the injured men cannot return to work for many weeks or months.

In days past a fracture of the spine was considered to be a hopeless case and a miner so injured was commonly expected never to work in the pit again. A fractured limb might be splinted and kept immovable for long periods while the bone-ends knit together. Meanwhile, muscles wasted for lack of use, adhesions formed, and when the bone was united the patient had to be re-educated, even to its partial use. In long periods of immobility and inactivity the patient had ample time to reflect upon his misfortunes; to worry about their effects upon his capacity as a wage-earner. The will to get well had the threefold task of fighting against pain, boredom and depression.

Medical practice has, recently, progressed into a system of treatment known for convenience as Rehabilitation, and has changed all this.

Rehabilitation treatment has long been advocated in medical circles, but it has taken the war, and particularly the Royal Air Force, to demonstrate, fully, its worth.

The White Paper on Coal indicated that the Government desired that there should be rehabilitation for miners. The Miners' Welfare Commission undertook this important task, and for the second time during the war attention was directed to a new and urgent man-power problem.

The first need was to secure quickly the best medical advice, to engage surgeons and qualified treatment staff and to find suitable premises to be adapted and equipped as centres, and also to ensure that the idea of rehabilitation was accepted by industry.





The miners now have special rehabilitation centres, mainly because it was quicker, in some districts, so to establish them than to merge with other general schemes which were developing. Berry Hill Hall, near Mansfield, was a pioneer rehabilitation centre, it having been set up independently by Midland coal owners, who agreed that the centre should be purchased by the Commission. The surgeon and staff were invited to remain. At the instigation of the Commission, Scottish miners were quickly catered for by an emergency medical centre at Glen Eagles. There were also two well-appointed inland convalescent homes capable of quick adaptation. Country houses standing in fine grounds were soon found for three other centres.

Thus it was that in a very short time residential accommodation for 330 fracture cases has been secured. Other schemes will soon be completed.

At each of the six Miners' Welfare Rehabilitation Centres there is a spacious gymnasium, rooms for medical treatment and for occupational therapy. For outdoor exercise, there are playing-fields and bowling greens, and the immediate countryside invites walks and cycle rides. There is also ample provision for indoor and outdoor recreation. The patients, although in residence, are free in the evenings and are permitted to go home at week-ends.

These are only the visible provisions of the Miners' Welfare Rehabilitation scheme. Behind them are allied modern medical methods and a well-considered system of administration.

The orthopaedic surgeon does not claim that his skill alone is sufficient. To it must be allied many forms of therapy and, above all, an invocation of the patient's own determination to get well. The surgeon's work is only begun when he sets the fracture. As soon as practicable the patient is started upon a series of exercises, gentle but effective. These exercises are designed both to keep muscles from atrophy and to give the

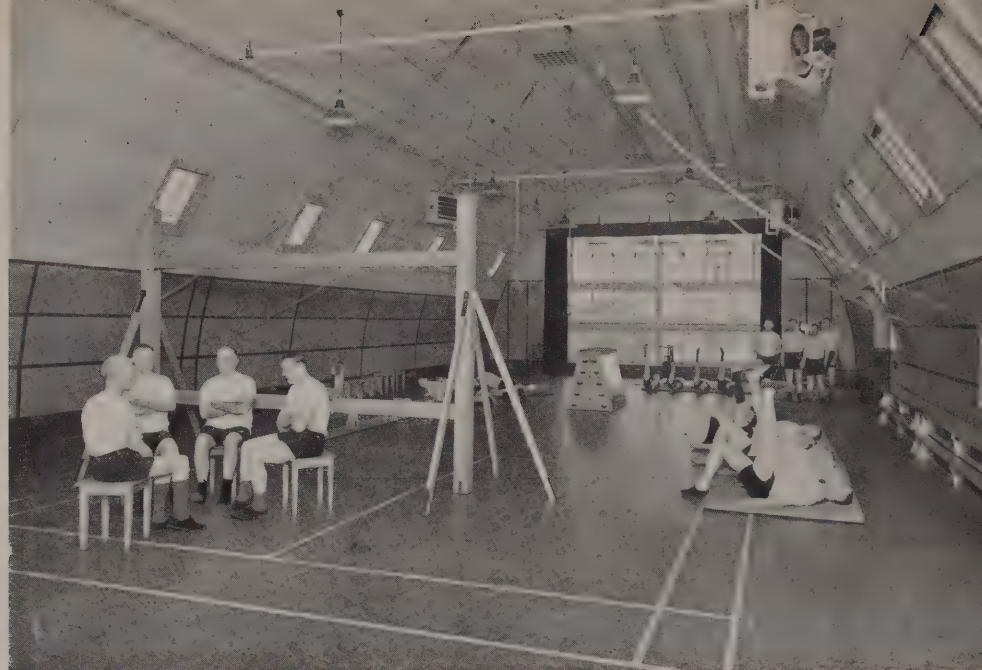
patient an active interest in promoting his own recovery. Even the patient with a fractured spine, or broken back, as it is more commonly described, will, as soon as he has been put in a plaster jacket, be launched upon such a series of exercises.

Exercises become progressively less passive and more vigorous. Later they are given some intrinsic interest. Various kinds of handicraft, such as basket-making and weaving, are used to exercise the injured limb and muscles. The patient's attention is diverted, for occupational therapy is a skilfully devised ingredient of the cure. Various forms of physiotherapy—massage, electrical treatment, infra-red and ultra-violet rays—heal injury and tone up the patient's muscles to enable him to progress in his exercises. Meanwhile, the surgeon keeps a watchful eye on each stage of the patient's progress. Exercises are kept well within the patient's capabilities. Progress into the next stage is regarded more as a reward than a prescription. The patient is not commanded to throw away his crutches, but he will do so eagerly when permission is granted. Remedial gymnastics, outdoor and indoor games, all fit into the scheme so that, when the patient has finished treatment, he has either recovered fully, ready to return to his job, or is as fit as possible to be trained for another one.

The technique of rehabilitation is the perfect co-ordination of all possible aids to recovery, not least among which are intangible ones of mutual confidence between the surgeon, staff and patients. The atmosphere of the rehabilitation centre is not institutional or forbidding; it is gay and purposeful and as carefree as is humanly possible. Environment is less important than this atmosphere in which the will to recovery thrives. It is engendered by the enthusiasm of the surgeon and his staff; not by the lavishness of premises or equipment.

In the development of these centres the Commission has been assisted by a Medical Advisory Committee of Surgeons who have great experience and an enthusiasm for rehabilitation.



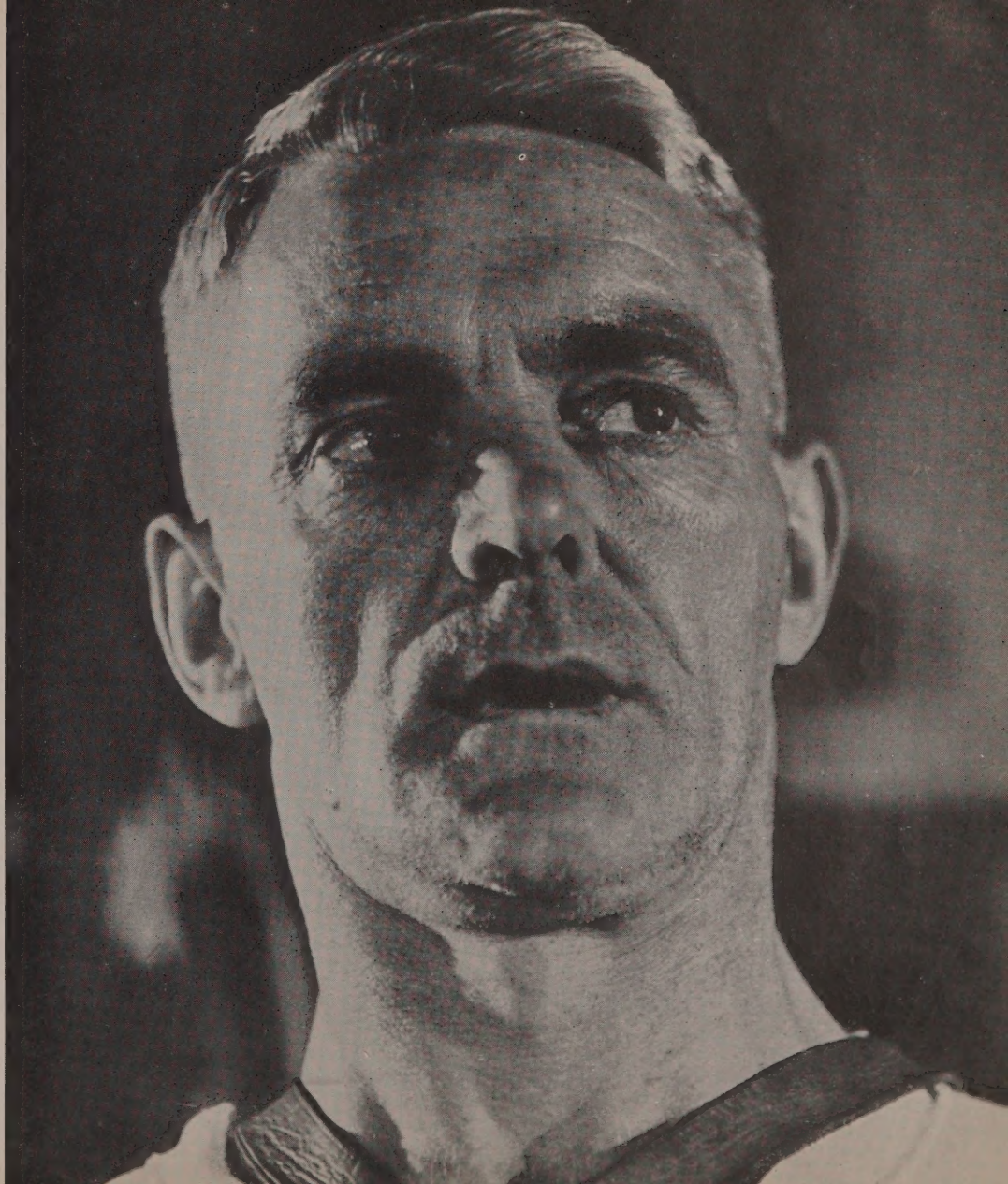


The surgeon-in-charge of each centre is appointed by the Commission. He in turn advises the Management Committee on the appointment of the resident staff, for the centre is managed by a Committee of local owners and miners' representatives in equal numbers, although ownership is vested in the Miners' Welfare Commission.

Each centre is linked to a Fracture Clinic where the surgeon-in-charge has facilities to treat or keep contact with injured miners from the time of accident until they can be received at the centre. From then onwards they remain in his charge until treatment is complete. To him, solely, is entrusted the duty of declaring any patient fit to return to work. When a patient has sufficiently recovered to return to work, his former employers are informed. It is an understood thing that he will either get

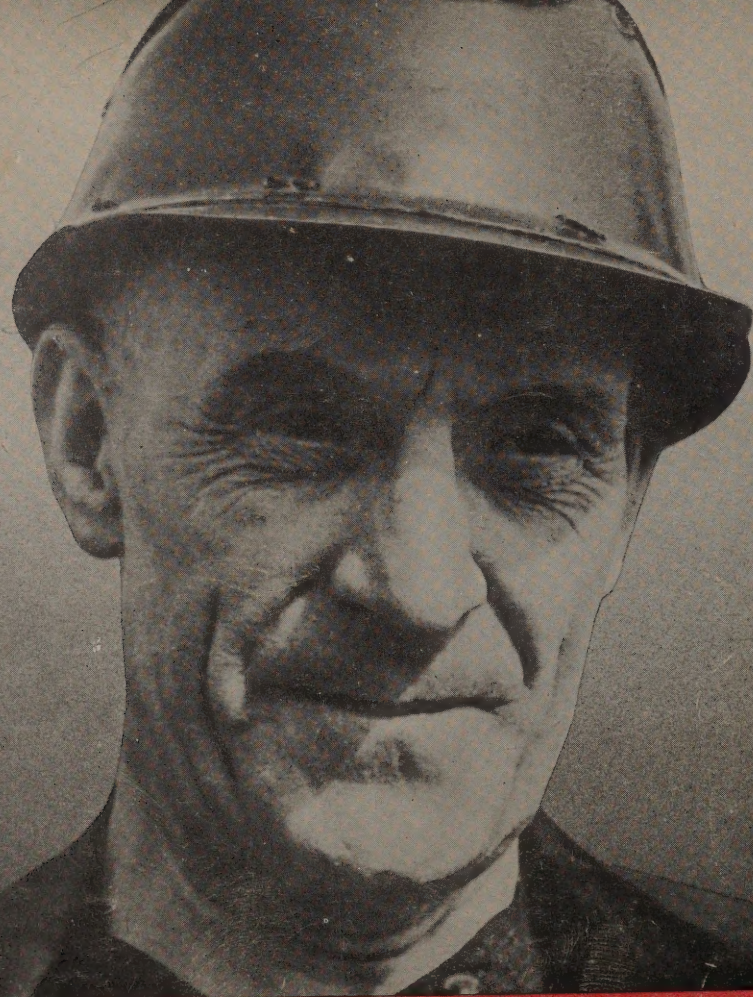
his own job back or be given another one in the pit. But if he suffers from disablement preventing a return he will be transferred to a suitable centre for training in another occupation.

This is a broad impression only of the Miners' Welfare Rehabilitation and it is perhaps too early for considered judgment or optimistic predictions. Photographs are more eloquent than words can hope to be. They show how rehabilitation is not an irksome routine. In them can be seen evidence of that confident association between surgeon, staff and patients in which skill and the will to conquer disability combine so successfully. In these centres a new purpose of social well-being is served in the restoration of the injured miner to health, to confidence and, in many cases, to his own job.









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